

filed at least five days prior to the expiration of the time period provided and shall include an explanation of the facts and circumstances that justify the extension.

§ 171.6 Ex parte communications.

(a) *Prohibition of ex parte communications.* (1) No party to a proceeding before the Commission under these rules and no person outside the Commission who has a direct or indirect interest (pecuniary or otherwise) in the outcome of the proceeding or might be aggrieved by the outcome of the proceeding shall make or knowingly cause to be made an *ex parte* communication relevant to the merits of the proceeding subject to these rules to a Commissioner, member of the personal staff of a Commissioner or Commission decisional employee.

(2) No Commissioner, member of the personal staff of a Commissioner or Commission decisional employee shall make or knowingly cause to be made to a party to a proceeding subject to these rules or to any person outside the Commission who has a direct or indirect interest (pecuniary or otherwise) in the outcome of the proceeding or might be aggrieved by the outcome of the proceeding, an *ex parte* communication relevant to the merits of the proceeding subject to these rules.

(b) *Procedure for handling.* Any Commissioner, member of a Commissioner's personal staff or Commission decisional employee who receives, or who makes or knowingly causes to be made, an *ex parte* communication prohibited by paragraph (a) of this section shall:

(1) Place on the public record of the proceeding:

- (i) All such written communications;
- (ii) Memoranda stating the substance of all such oral communications; and
- (iii) All written responses, and memoranda stating the substance of all oral responses, to the materials described in paragraphs (b)(1)(i) and (b)(1)(ii) of this section; and

(2) Promptly give written notice of such communications and responses thereto to all parties to the proceedings to which the communication or responses relate.

(c) *Sanctions.* (1) Upon receipt of an *ex parte* communication knowingly made or knowingly caused to be made by a party in violation of the prohibition contained in paragraph (a)(1) of this section, the Commission may, to the extent consistent with the interests of justice and the policies of the Act, require the party to show cause why his claim or interest in the proceeding should not be dismissed, denied, disregarded, or otherwise adversely affected on account of such violation.

(2) Any Commissioner, member of a Commissioner's personal staff or Commission decisional employee who knowingly makes or knowingly causes to be made, or who knowingly solicits or knowingly causes the solicitation of, an *ex parte* communication which violates the prohibitions contained in paragraph (a)(2) of this section may be deemed to have engaged in conduct of the type proscribed by 17 CFR 140.735-3(b)(3).

(d) *Applicability of prohibitions and sanctions against ex parte communications.* (1)(i) The prohibitions of this section shall begin to apply at the time that a copy of a notice of appeal has been filed with the Proceedings Clerk in accordance with § 171.23 or § 171.44 of this part; or a petition for stay or for an emergency effective date has been filed in accordance with § 171.22, § 171.41 or § 171.43 of this part. The prohibitions of this section shall remain in effect until a final order has been entered in the proceeding which is no longer subject to review by the Commission or to review by any court.

(ii) The Commission may, by specific order entered in a particular proceeding, determine that these prohibitions shall commence from some date prior, or shall continue until a date subsequent, to the times specified in paragraph (d)(1)(i) of this section.

(2) The sanctions in paragraph (c)(1) of this section shall not apply to a person making a prohibited communication (or causing it to be made) absent evidence that the person acted with actual or constructive knowledge that the person receiving the communication was a Commissioner, member of the personal staff of a Commissioner or a Commission decisional employee.